

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Sub C2 1. (Currently Amended) A method for renting to a customer a self-storage unit located at a self-storage facility, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a customer service area;

establishing ~~customer~~ contact [with] between a remote manager [when the] and a customer [enters a] entering the customer service area ~~proximate the self-storage facility~~ so that the customer and manager can communicate using a communication link;

communicating to the remote manager an indication of the customers storage needs;

AS ~~recommending~~ communicating a recommended self-storage unit to the customer from the remote manager;

facilitating inspection of the recommended self-storage unit by the customer; and
communicating credit information about the customer to the remote manager; and
establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility under the guidance of the remote manager.

2. (Currently amended) The method as defined in claim 1 wherein said step of establishing a self storage rental agreement includes the steps of providing a rental agreement to the customer, the insertion of data onto the rental agreement by the customer, and ~~including the step of~~ verifying the inserted data by the remote manager.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the communication link comprises a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web or video connection.

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4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing customer contact further comprises the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when a customer service area door contact is activated.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing contact between the remote manager and customer further comprises the step of ~~telephoning~~ automatically effecting communication between the remote manager and customer ~~when the customer activates a push button switch~~ in response to the customer entering the customer service area.

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6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing contact further comprises the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer picks up a telephone receiver disposed within the customer service area.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of recommending a self-storage unit further comprises ~~the steps of taking into account storage needs of the customer, finding~~ identifying a self-storage unit which can accommodate the storage needs of the customer, and recommending to the customer a self-storage unit size and location within the self-storage facility that can accommodate the storage needs of the customer.

8. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~7~~ wherein the step of facilitating inspection ~~including~~ includes the step of [remotely] selectively opening an access gate by the remote manager to allow the customer access to and egress from the ~~recommended~~ self-storage unit facility.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of facilitating inspection includes opening an access gate, viewing the customer through an on-site camera as the customer ~~approaches~~ passes through the access gate toward the recommended self-storage unit, and ~~remotely opening~~ providing customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so that the customer can inspect the unit.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing a rental agreement further comprises the step of:

directing the customer to fill out a rental agreement form ~~identifying a~~ having pre-printed self-storage unit ~~selected for rental~~ identification by inserting personal information about the customer, and indicating a method of payment.

11. (Currently amended) A method for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage rental unit facility, said method comprising the steps of:

automatically telephoning a remote manager when a customer enters a customer service area at the self-storage unit facility so as to enable the customer and remote manager to communicate using a communication link;

establishing the storage needs of the customer by communicating the customer's needs to the remote manager in response to selection criteria presented to the customer in the customer service area;

selecting one or more self-storage units at said facility that can accommodate the customer's storage needs;

communicating to the customer said one or more self-storage units that can accommodate the storage needs to the customer;

opening an access gate to said one or more self-storage units;

viewing the customer as the customer approaches said access gate and one or more self-storage units;

~~opening at least one of said self storage units so that~~ enabling the customer ~~can to~~ inspect said at least one self-storage unit; and

establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility under the guidance of the remote manager.

12. (Currently amended) A system for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage unit facility, said system comprising:

means for automatically establishing contact with a remote manager when a customer enters a customer service area proximate said self-storage facility so as to enable the customer and the remote manager to communicate using a communication link;

means for recommending to the customer a self-storage unit adequate to meet the customer's needs;

means for allowing the customer to inspect the recommended self-storage unit; and

means for establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and the self-storage facility.

13. (Currently amended) The system of claim ~~11~~ 12 wherein the means for establishing contact with a remote manager further comprises a telephone connection between the customer and the manager.

14. (Currently amended) The system of claim ~~11~~ 12 wherein the communication link comprises at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video connection.

15. (Currently amended) The system of claim 44 12 wherein the means for recommending a self-storage unit further comprises a telephone connection for communicating the self-storage unit.

16. (Currently amended) The system of claim 44 12 wherein the means for allowing the customer to inspect the recommended self-storage unit further comprises a gate access controller interfaced to a telephone network.

17. (Currently amended) The system of claim 44 12 wherein the means for establishing a self storage rental agreement further comprises a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed rental agreement forms.

18. (Currently amended) A system for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage rental facility, said system comprising:

a customer service area having an access door;

means for automatically telephoning a remote manager when a customer enters a the customer service area of a self-storage facility wherein so as to enable the customer and manager to communicate using a communication link;

means for determining the storage needs of the customer and communicating the storage needs to the manager;

means for selecting a self-storage unit that can accommodate the customer's storage needs;

means for communicating a at least one selected self-storage unit to the customer that best meets the customer's needs;

means for ~~opening~~ enabling the remote manager to control opening of an access gate to allow customer access to at least one self-storage unit;

means for ~~viewing~~ including at least one camera enabling the manager to view the customer through at least one camera as the customer passes through the access gate and approaches the selected self-storage unit;

means for ~~remotely opening~~ providing customer access to the selected self-storage unit so that the customer can inspect the communicated self-storage unit; and

means for ~~establishing~~ enabling a self storage rental agreement to be established between the customer and the self-storage facility.

19. (Original) The system of claim 17 18 wherein the communication link comprises at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video connection.

20. (Original) The system of claim 17 18 wherein the means for ~~finding~~ selecting a self-storage unit further comprises a database search for at least one available self-storage unit.

21. (Currently amended) The system of claim 17 18 wherein the means for opening an access gate further comprises means for sending a signal to a gate access controller interfaced to a telephone network.

22. (Original) The system of claim 17 18 wherein the means for establishing a self storage rental agreement further comprises a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed rental agreement forms.

23. (Currently amended) A system for renting a self-storage unit comprising:
a customer service site ~~comprising~~ including an audio visual communication system ~~for establishing~~ enabling automatic communication between a remote manager and a potential customer of a self storage business upon entering the service site; and

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a gate access controller ~~for allowing~~ selectively operable by the remote manager
to allow the customer entrance access to a self-storage unit rental facility comprising at least one
self-storage unit.

24. (New) A system for renting a self-storage unit located at a self-storage unit
facility from a location remote from the facility, said system comprising:

a customer service area proximate the self-storage unit facility,

means for detecting entry of a customer into the service area from the location
remote from the service area;

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means for automatically establishing contact with the remote location when a
customer enters the customer service area so as to enable the customer to communicate with the
remote location using a communication link;

means for inquiring from the remote location what the customer's storage needs
are;

means for recommending to the customer a self-storage unit adequate to meet the
customer's needs;

means for enabling the customer to inspect the recommended self-storage unit by
passing through an access gate;

means for enabling the customer to be visually monitored from the remote
location as the customer passes through the access gate; and

means for establishing a self storage rental agreement between the customer and
the self-storage facility.

25. (New) The system as defined in claim 24 including means for enabling visual images of the gate access area, self-storage units and the customer service area to be transmitted to the remote location.

26. (New) The system as defined in claim 24 including means for enabling a conversation between the remote location and a customer to be initiated from the remote location when a customer enters the customer service area.

27. (New) The system as defined in claim 26 wherein the customer service area includes customer detection means, a customer service counter, and audio visual means enabling viewing of a customer entering the customer service area and when positioned at the service counter.

28. (New) The system as defined in claim 27 wherein said customer service area includes an access door, said customer detection means being responsive to a customer opening the access door to initiate communication with the remote location.

29. (New) The system as defined in claim 28 wherein said communication is effected through a communication network enabling audio, video, and multimedia transmission of information between the customer service area and remote location.

30. (New) The system as defined in claim 24 wherein the customer service area includes means for reading credit card information presented by the customer, and means for transmitting the credit card information to the remote location.

31. (New) The system as defined in claim 30 wherein the customer service area includes a printer enabling printed information to be provided to the customer service area from the remote location.

32. (New) The system as defined in claim 24 wherein the customer service area includes a countertop having a first predetermined area thereon viewed by at least one camera that enables the predetermined area to be viewed from the remote location whereby to facilitate remote viewing of a rental agreement disposed on the predetermined countertop area.

33. (New) The system as defined in claim 32 wherein the countertop has a second predetermined area thereon for receiving customer identification and payment and credit information, and camera means enabling observation of the second predetermined area from the remote location.

34. (New) The system as defined in claim 24 wherein the customer service area includes a merchandise cabinet having merchandise therein of possible interest to the customer, access to said cabinet being controlled from the remote location.

35. (New) The method as defined in claim 2 including the steps of requesting the customer to place personal and credit information in a predetermined location in the service area, and enabling the remote manager to visually observe the information and the customer so as to verify that any personal descriptive information matches the customer.

36. (New) The method as defined in claim 35 wherein said predetermined location is defined by a counter disposed within the service area, and including at least one camera/monitor enabling the remote manager to visually observe the counter and the customer.

37. (New) In a system for renting self-storage units from a location remote from a self-storage facility, the improvement comprising:

a customer service area enabling a customer to enter therein, a customer service counter disposed within said customer service area, said service counter enabling a customer to place information on the counter,

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and means for enabling said information to be viewed by a manager at the remote location in a manner to verify from the remote location that any identifying information relates to the customer.

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38. (New) The system as defined in claim 37 wherein said means for enabling viewing of said information includes at least one camera/monitor disposed in predetermined position within the service area.

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